

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

December 13, 2022

The Honorable Lloyd J. Austin III  
Secretary of Defense  
1000 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, D.C. 20301-1000

General Mark A. Milley  
Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff  
9999 Joint Staff Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20318-9999

Dear Secretary Austin and Chairman Milley:

We served on active duty and were commissioned through the Reserve Officers' Training Corp (ROTC) program. We believe ROTC and JROTC programs help our national security and strongly support them. We are concerned, however, that some high school students may have been forced into JROTC programs. We are writing to ask what the Department of Defense (DoD) knew about alleged mandatory enrollment of high school students into JROTC classes, and what steps the DoD intends to take to prevent forced enrollment of students in JROTC classes. We know you agree with us that unlike in authoritarian countries, the United States should not force students into military programs.

On December 11, 2022, the *New York Times* published an investigation into forced enrollment of high school students into JROTC programs at various school districts across America.<sup>1</sup> The article stated: "A review of J.R.O.T.C. enrollment data collected from more than 200 public records requests showed that dozens of schools have made the program mandatory or steered more than 75 percent of students in a single grade into the classes, including schools in Detroit, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Oklahoma City and Mobile, Ala."<sup>2</sup> The investigation also found that "A vast majority of the schools with those high enrollment numbers were attended by a large proportion of nonwhite students and those from low-income households."<sup>3</sup>

We request the DoD to answer the following questions:

1. Does the DoD agree that some school districts were automatically enrolling students into JROTC programs? If so, please list the school districts that the DoD believes this automatic enrollment is happening?
2. If the *Times* investigation is true, when did the DoD first become aware that some school districts were automatically enrolling students into JROTC programs?
3. Does the DoD ask school districts if they are automatically enrolling students into JROTC programs?
4. What steps, if any, does the DoD currently take to prevent automatic enrollment of students in JROTC programs?

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<sup>1</sup> Mike Baker, Nicholas Bogel-Burroughs, and Ilana Marcus, "Thousands of Teens Are Being Pushed Into Military's Junior R.O.T.C.," *New York Times*, December 12, 2022.

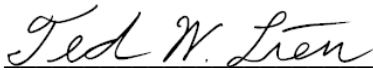
<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

5. What steps does the DoD intend to take in the future to ensure automatic enrollment of students into JROTC programs does not occur?

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



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TED W. LIEU  
Member of Congress



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CHRISSY HOULAHAN  
Member of Congress